

A DAY IN THE LIFE of Indianapolis

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Indianapolis is far from being called “the city that never sleeps,” but it’s also no longer considered “Naptown” — a sleepy city that rolls up the sidewalks after dark. Work and life hum from sunup to sundown. ■ IndyStar photographers spent 24 hours — from 6 a.m. to 6 a.m. — photographing daily life in Indianapolis inside the I-465 loop. ■ From neighborhoods to nightlife and from politicians to police, our photographers painted a portrait of what keeps Indianapolis ticking every minute of every day.

Read how each journalist described their day, and scroll to the bottom to see all 50 time-stamped photos.

A start with purpose and direction

I kicked off our day-in-the-life series just before 6 a.m. by people-watching at the Julia M. Carson Transit Center. Personalities ran the gamut: From a philosophical man with a dance to his step, to a young mom watching her sleeping daughter dream as she waited to go to school for the day. Some were waiting inside to travel or go to work for the day; some were just enjoying a momentary seat and warmth. The morning had begun for many at the center, as everyone flowed together with their sense of daily purpose.

The morning continued as I found IUPUI’s ROTC cadets pushing themselves in exercise, commuters moving like lava on the streets, and people seeking caffeine at Coat Check Coffee.

The sunrise wasn’t visible on this day, but the sun did provide light through the patterned cloud cover, giving Indy and the White River a blue palette with the clouds and the river gliding gently in unison.

I ended my morning with songs about dinosaurs, frogs and Old MacDonald’s farm sung by a Riley music therapist. I watched the experience in a toddler’s eyes. The start of our day-in-the-life day had purpose and direction. As the community began the morning all about “business,” the human spirit in all its diversity began to emerge.

—Kelly Wilkinson



5:30 a.m. — Long’s Bakery, known for their glazed doughnuts which are made in quantities of 800 dozen a day on weekends, sees the first customers of the day at opening time, Thursday, Oct. 17, 2019.

An inspiration

As I weaved up and down the streets in some of Indianapolis’ most hidden neighborhoods, the cultural diversity I witnessed was inspiring.

I spoke with and photographed diverse business owners, dedicated employees and kids learning and using their imaginations. At one point, I had to pull out my smartphone to communicate with a group of Latino children enjoying fall break. Diversity in a community can make it stronger, more accepting. It was truly inspiring to see the diversity inside the loop.

—Mykal McElDowney



3:36 p.m. ▫ Lillian Jeter, 4, reacts to the sight of a pumpkin held by Katelyn Johnson (not pictured) in the pumpkin patch at Waterman’s Family Farm in Indianapolis,

A view from above

During my daytime shift, I took a bird’s eye look at Indianapolis to better see the pulse that runs through it.

I positioned myself above Herron High School to photograph students as they scurried away for fall break. They formed little clusters on the front lawn along 16th Street, giggling and exchanging hugs before scattering in different directions home.

At rush hour, I watched traffic stop and go, bunch up and thin out, lighter than usual thanks to school breaks.

Though Indianapolis is a capital city, it marches to the same beat as the small towns that surround it.

—Jenna Watson



A city’s late-night charm

There are some perks in being a night owl.

I know there are a few Indy residents who have experienced a late night or two during a workweek.

Though some of our shifts might end at 6 p.m., others are just getting started. I roamed around the city in the quiet hours around midnight. I found the bartenders, bands, artists and servers who keep the pulse of the city. There was this charm and soft glow when the street lights and neon signs came on.

The people who live, work and thrive in the city bring the magic to Indianapolis. While some are asleep, others are wide awake. I got to be a part of that glow for one night and be a part of the lives of the people who live for this city.

—Grace Hollars

7:33 p.m. — Monument Circle just after sun set, as seen from the roof of the Sheraton Indianapolis City Center Hotel, on Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019
MICHELLE PEMBERTON/INDYSTAR



11:04 a.m. ▫ Maria Marin reads ‘Voyage to the Pharos’ to a group of children on fall break at Martin Luther King Community Center on Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019. The book follows the journey a boy named Dino who wants to travel on a boat to see a lighthouse, the tallest building in the world, but the trip would prove to be tough. MYKAL MCELDOWNEY/INDYSTAR

A new day

The wee hours are where mayhem and bakeries thrive. My shift took place after the bars closed and when the 6 a.m. coffee started dripping.

The 24-hour Beech Grove Bowl hosted a trio of pro soccer players in town for an earlier game against Indy Eleven; they laughed and joked as they tried to stave off an almost certain gutter ball.

Indy has murders, and TV journalists for Fox 59/CBS 4 talked about them with nice video gear a block away from city hall, in a well-lit area, just in case a mugger had a pawn shop on the brain.

And, like a shadowy attack by a folded chair, a giant WrestleMania truck lurched through Downtown in advance of a weekend show.

The main event of the morning, however, was being in Long’s Bakery to witness the making of those glazed doughnuts that are the stuff of office workers’ dreams.

—Robert Scheer



11:33 a.m. ▫ Inside Kenny’s Barber Shop, located on E. 38th Street, barber Marvell Barnes trims the hair of Hamilton Southeastern student Savion Wilkerson on Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019. Wilkerson is the nephew of former Indiana University basketball player and Indiana Basketball Hall of Fame member Bobby Wilkerson,

11:01 p.m. — Gary Profit, left, talks with a coworker while picking up Bird Scooters around the of the stairs at Soldiers & Sailors Monument at Monument Circle, Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019, downtown Indianapolis. GRACE HOLLARS/INDYSTAR



12:51 p.m.

— Frank White serves a classic corned beef-loaded sandwich to a customer at Shapiro’s Delicatessen in Indianapolis, Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019. JENNA WATSON/INDYSTAR

A moment of reflection

As I created a time-lapse overlooking Monument Circle, I reflected, as I often do, on the gift journalism gives back to those of us in the profession. It’s not money, fame or even career security: It’s the ability to satisfy one’s curiosity about the city they live in.

Who are the people that make up Indianapolis? What do they need, want, aspire to?

A journalist can move seamlessly between all social classes, walks of life, political leanings, nationalities and more to experience and attempt to understand — with all humility and without judgment. The reward is simply experiencing a moment of someone’s life or an event. Often it’s someone’s best day, but equally often, it’s someone’s worst.

As the years go by, the journalist collects more moments, adding them to the memory bank and becoming rich through experience. Lives lived, memories made, and moments shared through pictures that say more than words add to our collective understanding of one another — the gift we endeavor to give back to those who shared a moment of their lives with us.

—Michelle Pemberton



12:56 p.m. ▫ Certified music therapist Caitlin Krater, right, works with two-year-old Brody Wright at Riley Hospital for Children, Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019. Brody, who has Omenn syndrome, SCID and Evans



4:31 p.m. — Ayden Brooks practices tricks at the Major Taylor Skate Park in Indianapolis on Wednesday, Oct. 16, 2019. MICHELLE PEMBERTON/INDYSTAR



7:06 p.m. — Shelby Crow, 11, and Peytra Oomkes, 8, hold hands while roller skating at Skateland on the northwest side of Indianapolis, Wednesday, Oct. 16,